

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CANBER 04635 010812Z
ACTION COME-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-09 ISO-00 EB-07 /017 W
-----020176 010917Z /21
R 010637Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 777

UNCLAS CANBERRA 4635

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, AS
SUBJECT: ALLEGED AUSTRALIAN REQUIREMENT FOR LOCAL MANUFACTURE OF
PHARMACEUTICALS

REF: STATE 151133

1. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR EMBASSY TO RESPOND FULLY TO REFTTEL
WITHOUT SPECIFICS WHICH STIMULATED INDUSTRY INQUIRY TO
DEPARTMENT. LACKING SUCH SPECIFICS, EMBASSY UNABLE TO JUDGE
WHETHER INQUIRY REFLECTS UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMOR OR SPECIAL
DEVELOPMENT WORTHY OF IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATION.

2. AS FAR AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO
AUSTRALIAN LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL MANUFACTURING OF
PHARMACEUTICALS, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO RECENT AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT PURCHASE OF A PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING FIRM.

3. DEPARTMENT'S SOURCE MAY BE REFERRING TO AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT TESTING PROGRAM FOR IMPORTED DRUGS. DRUGS
PROPOSED FOR IMPORT MUST FIRST BE TESTED BY FEDERAL HEALTH
AUTHORITIES TO CONFIRM ACCURACY OF THEIR CLAIMS, I.E.
THEIR EFFICACY, AND TO CONFIRM THAT THEY MEET ESTABLISHED
STANDARDS FOR PURITY, AVOIDANCE OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES, ETC.
PRIOR APPROVAL OF MINISTER FOR HEALTH IS REQUIRED FOR
IMPORTS AND IS GRANTED FOLLOWING THIS TESTING. BUT WE
KNOW OF NO EVIDENCE THAT MINISTER FOR HEALTH APPROVAL
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IS USED TO COMPEL LOCAL MANUFACTURE.

4. WHILE THIS ACTION WAS NOT "RECENT", REPORT THAT
GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY ASSUMED OWNERSHIP OF A PRIVATE
PHARMACEUTICAL FIRM MAY REFER TO AN ACQUISITION DURING
THE PERIOD OF LABOR GOVERNMENT FROM 1972-75. IN ORDER
TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON PHARMACEUTICAL PRICING PRACTICES,

LABOR GOVERNMENT EARLY IN THIS PERIOD ACQUIRED CONTROLLING INTEREST IN FAWNMAC INDUSTRIES PTY. LTD., A SMALL COMPANY MANUFACTURING A LIMITED VARIETY OF GENERIC PRODUCTS. THERE WAS SOME IDEA AT THAT TIME OF EXTENDING ITS MANUFACTURING BUT THIS NEVER MATERIALIZED. FAWNMAC ALSO ACTS AS AGENTS FOR SOME OVERSEAS COMPANIES, INCLUDING ARMOUR PHARMACEUTICAL CO. AND SYNTEX PHARMACEUTICALS OF UK AND BOEHRINGER MANNHEIM OF WEST GERMANY. PRESENT LIBERAL GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED ITS INTENTION OF SELLING COMPANY, THOUGH MATTER IS AT PRESENT IN LIMBO.

5. AUSTRALIAN IMPORT STATISTICS CONFIRM THAT PRIVATE PHARMACEUTICAL IMPORTING IS ALIVE AND WELL. AVERAGE ANNUAL VALUE OF IMPORTS DURING FOUR YEARS FY73-76 WAS A\$84.5 MILLION. IN FY76 VALUE OF IMPORTS WAS A\$91.7 MILLION. ALSTON

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